

32. PHLOGENAS JOHANNÆ, Sclater.

One female in the collection.

Iris and beak black; feet dark plum-colour. Food berries and seeds.

33. LIMOSA BAUERI, Naum.

Limosa novæ-zealandiæ, G. R. Gray.

I may add to these notes that in Lt. Richards's collection from Havannah Harbour, Vate, New Hebrides, is a *Zosterops* closely allied to *Z. griseonota*, G. R. Gray, from New Caledonia, which I propose to name

ZOSTEROPS VATENSIS, sp. nov.

♂ *Z. griseonotæ* affinis, sed robustior, rostro fortissimo, thorace et collo flavis, abdomine et crisso cinereo-albis. Long. tot. 5·4, alæ 2·55, caudæ 2·2.

♀ mari similis.

This species may be discriminated from *Z. griseonota* by its very strong bill, the much greater extent of yellow on the throat and neck, and the absence of yellow on the lower tail-coverts.

XXXIX.—*Ornithological Notes from Afghanistan*.—No. I.

By Lieutenant R. G. WARDLAW-RAMSAY, 67th Regiment, F.Z.S., M.B.O.U.

My regiment having been ordered to reinforce the division under General Roberts, I have now an opportunity, for which I formerly hardly dared to hope, of studying the ornithology of a country comparatively speaking so little known as Afghanistan.

During my stay in these parts I propose to forward, from time to time, in hopes that they may be of some interest to readers of 'The Ibis,' notes on the birds observed. As I have no books with me, Jerdon's 'Birds of India' excepted, I have asked Colonel Godwin-Austen to be good enough to correct any errors in nomenclature that may occur in my manuscript, and also to determine such specimens as I fail to identify

myself. Albeit the materials at hand are somewhat scanty, I shall endeavour to make a commencement.

Byan Kheyl, where the regiment is at present encamped, is situated at an elevation of about 7600 feet above the sea, in the valley of the Keria river, in longitude $69^{\circ} 50'$ and latitude $33^{\circ} 56'$, about eight miles to the southward of the great Safed-Koh range. On the east and south it is bounded by a long spur from the same range, through which runs the now famous Peiwar Kotal or pass. To the north-west is another spur of the Safed Koh, whilst to the south-west the valley trends away towards Ali Kheyl, where the main body of the force under General Roberts is now encamped.

The hills on all sides are covered from 7000 feet and upwards with a thick growth of pine-wood, the prevailing trees being the deodar (*Cedrus deodara*), *Pinus gerardiana*, and *P. excelsa*, whilst at lower elevations their place is taken by the juniper (*Juniperus communis*).

On the 18th April, when we arrived, the snow was still lying thick in places, and, indeed, for ten days after that we were subject to continual falls of snow, so that I was not surprised to find birds scarce. My expeditions, so far, cannot be said to have been productive of much result, chiefly from the fact that, owing to the unsettled state of the country, it has not been considered safe to venture far from camp. On first entering the pine-forests, I was struck by, what appeared to me, an almost total absence of birds; but a little search soon revealed quantities of the small Warblers (*Phylloscopi*). Of these I have obtained two species, both of which appear to be breeding. Tomtits also were particularly abundant, as might be expected, and were apparently breeding; but three species only have as yet been obtained, *Parus cinereus*, *Lophophanes melanolophus* (Vigors), and *L. beavani* (Blyth). A nest of *P. cinereus*, which I found in a hollow pine-tree (*Pinus gerardiana*) on the 1st May, contained four young ones about six days old.

Round the camp, where the trees have been cleared away, and nothing left but stunted juniper-bushes and sweet briars, birds are very abundant, but of few species. The noble-

looking Lämmergeyer attracts the attention of the least observant as he sails majestically round the camp. Besides the Egyptian *Neophron*, this is the only Vulture I have seen. A few pairs of Kites (*Milvus govinda*?) only frequent the camp. The Grey Whitethroat's (*Sylvia affinis*, Blyth, No. 582, Jerdon) song is heard on all sides : the bird is excessively common, and was breeding by 27th May. The Whinchat (*Pratincola indica*, Blyth) is the commonest of all birds in the open country, perhaps excepting *Emberiza stewarti*, which is excessively abundant, and, I take it, about to nest, if some have not already commenced, for I have seen the birds collecting materials for building. The note of this bird is a very feeble imitation of that of our familiar English Yellow-hammer. Small flocks of the Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella brachydactyla*), and here and there a pair of Blue-throated Warblers (*Cyanecula suecica*), complete the list of birds which frequent the open country, so far as I have seen.

The Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) is common, as usual ; but Harriers are conspicuous by their absence. No Owls as yet observed ; but the cry of what I take to be *Syrnium niviculum*, Hodgson, from its similarity to that of our European Tawny Owl (*S. aluco*), is heard almost nightly. I have not, as yet, shot any Swallows or Swifts ; but one species of each is common, probably *Cotile riparia* and *Cypselus apus*. Numbers of Bee-eaters arrived on the last day of April and 1st of May, but disappeared as rapidly as they came. I could not determine to what species they belonged, for they were flying at a considerable height, and travelling apparently in a north-westerly direction. It may be that these were flocks of *Merops apiaster* or *M. ægyptius* in course of migration. The Indian Roller (*Coracias indicus*) is not uncommon near the skirts of the pine-forest, and the same may be said for *Upupa epops*. I have only seen one specimen of a Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*).

The Alcedinidæ are very scarce, if, indeed, there are any about our mountain-streams. I have walked along the banks of streams that are teeming with fish, and have never seen a Kingfisher. In the Kuram river, however, on the other side of the Peiwar Kotal, *Ceryle rudis* was tolerably common.

Picus himalayanus is the only Woodpecker observed; it is very scarce just now, although at some period of the year it must be common, for every decayed pine-tree has one or more of its nest-holes in it. I found it, however, very abundant on the Peiwar Kotal, as well as *Certhia himalayana*, which I have not, as yet, met with down here. I had hopes of the possibility of meeting with the Great Black Woodpecker (*Dryocopus martius*), but that still remains a pleasure to come. *Sitta cinnamomeiventris* is common, both here and on the Kotal, and appears to be breeding. The Laniidæ furnish only two species, viz. *Lanius erythronotus*, common, and *L. vittatus*, Valenci., rather rare. The latter species has a very pleasing song, which I have long endeavoured to render on paper, the nearest approach I can make to it being by the syllables *fud a whee tu, fud a whee tu, tzee, tzee, tzee, foi, foi, foi*, &c., quickly repeated.

Buchanga albicaudata, A. Hay, is rather rare; indeed I have only seen one specimen on this side of the Peiwar range; in the Kuram valley it is common.

Three species of Flycatcher have been obtained, viz. *Cyornis ruficauda* (Swains.), which is common enough in the pine-forests, *Butalis griseola* (Linn.), and *Hemichelidon fuliginosa*, Hodgs., which I found in the valleys in the pine-woods, and is, I think, breeding, as all the specimens I have obtained have been males showing signs of breeding.

Petrocosyphus cyanus is the only Thrush as yet observed. No Timelidæ, not even the ubiquitous *Chatarrhæa caudata*. Neither are there any Bulbuls or Orioles to be seen.

Of the Sylviidæ I have found *Pratincola indica*, *Ruticilla cæruleicephala*, and *Saxicola morio*. *S. picata*, Blyth, does not seem to be found here, but I saw several pairs about the fort at Ali Musjid towards the end of March.

One of the first birds I shot after arriving here was a female of *Ruticilla cæruleicephala*. I was quite at a loss to know what I had got, never to my knowledge having read a description of the female*. It was not until three weeks later,

* I have since observed that Mr. Hume has described the plumage of the female in 'Lahore to Yarkand,' and again in 'Stray Feathers,' vii. p. 391.

when I secured a male, that I discovered to what species the bird belonged. What puzzled me more was, that the bird, which I observed for some time before shooting it, had more the habits of a Flycatcher than a Redstart. The plumage is of a greyish olive-brown above, rufescent on the lower back and rump, passing into deep cinnamon-chestnut on the upper tail-coverts. Tail dark brown, edged with pale rufous. The throat and breast and flanks greyish brown, belly and vent white. The tips of the tertiaries white, forming a conspicuous white band. Breeding about the 25th of May.

Motacilla melanope, Pall., is nearly in full summer plumage, and found in pairs about the streams. *M. alba* is also common, but still in small flocks. The *Paridæ* have been alluded to elsewhere; but I may mention that, although a specimen I have referred to *Lophophanes beavani* agrees otherwise with Jerdon's description of that bird, there is a decided trace of fulvous, if not rufous, on the white nuchal spot (*vide* Jerdon, B. of India, ii. 275).

We next come to the *Corvidæ*, of which only one species is to be seen, viz. *Corvus culminatus*, Sykes. *Corvus corax*, Linn., vel *lawrencii*, Hume, so common throughout the Punjâb and Kuram valley, is not found here. The Magpie, *Pica rustica* (*P. bactriana*, Bonap.), is extremely abundant, and often found in large parties of as many as twenty, sitting in ploughed fields near the villages.

Acridotheres fuscus, which was very common in the Kuram valley, does not seem to occur on this side of the Kotal. I obtained a pair of *Mycerobas carnipes*, Hodgs., in the pine-forests, but I have had no opportunity yet of studying their habits. The iris of this species is hair-brown, the maxilla is brownish, and the mandible whitish horn-colour; the legs are pale fleshy brown. Only two species of Pigeon occur, as far as I know, viz. the Blue-Rock, *Columba intermedia*?, and *Palumbus casiotis*, Bonaparte, which has exactly the same habits as our English Wood-Pigeon, and is found in flocks varying from ten to fifty. No Doves have as yet arrived.

It would appear that the majority of the species above mentioned are birds which have passed the winter here, so that

I have great hopes that when the warm weather sets in I shall be able to add a large number of species to my list. The time at my disposal for excursions to the forests is limited, as we are almost daily employed in making roads for the passage of the artillery. Consequently the valley has not been any thing like explored, and doubtless a great number of species exists even now which I have not as yet observed.

By the time that I have materials for a second contribution, I hope to be able to give information about the nidification of many of the species which appear to be going to breed here.

Since writing the above (12th May) I have found *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, Blyth, near the camp. It appears to have just arrived.

(26th May.) Nests obtained as yet are those of *Emberiza stewarti* and a *Phylloscopus*, sp., also of *Sitta leucopsis*, from which I hope to get its eggs. I have found nests in process of building of *Cyornis ruficauda* and *Muscicapa grisola*, which arrived about three weeks since. I have also got a nest of *Turdus hodgsoni* with four young ones. Large numbers of *Turtur rupicola* have come in.

XL.—On the Orthography of some Birds' Names.

By HENRY T. WHARTON, M.A., F.Z.S.

Now that the advance of science is so rapid, and the number of names employed in every branch of zoology is undergoing a proportionate multiplication, it is more than ever important that every name that obtains currency should be so correctly formed and spelt that no one who has occasion to use such a name hereafter should have any ground for modifying its aspect as promulgated by its original user.

That names, as originally proposed, should have the advantage of subsequent criticism, the following recommendation is given in § 14 of the Stricklandian code:—"When a name has been erroneously written, and its orthography has been afterwards amended, we conceive that the authority of